(c) the number of Government Hospitals in the country equipped with incinerators?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Experts have opined that properly autoclaved glass syringes and pre-sterilized modern plastic disposable syringes are equally safe.

(b) The matter of possible recycle of used disposable needle and syringes in the healthcare system have been investigated extensively. The discretion to use glass or plastic syringes is vested solely with the user professional, depending on the available facilities. Ideally, it is opined that pre-sterilized disposable needles could be used with both kinds of syringes.

(c) All the Central Government Hospitals in the country are equipped with incinerators.

Renewal of permission to medical and dental colleges

2939. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether medical and dental colleges are admitting students to medical and dental courses, despite Government not renewing permissions to about 45 medical/dental colleges across the country for not having achieved the targets or lagging behind in infrastructure;

(b) whether to protect unwary students, State/Universities have been asked to ascertain the status of permission or renewal of permission from Government; and

(c) whether the Medical Council of India and Dental Council of India have also been asked to issue caution notices in the press media for the benefit of student?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) The permission for starting new medical and dental college is given initially for a period of one year. It is renewed on an year to year basis on verification of facilities available. The permission for the academic year 2001-02 has not so far renewed in respect of 12 medical and 31 dental colleges. Renewal of permission in case of these colleges will depend on availability of facilities and recommendations of the

councils. Till permission is renewed they are not supposed to admit fresh batch of students.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Yes, Sir.

Vegetarian and non-vegetarian label on food items

2940. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government propose to make it compulsory to label all food articles as vegetarian or non-vegetarian;

(b) if so, the purpose of such labelling; and

(c) by when this measure would come into effect?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) These labelling provisions will provide vital information about the nature of food being purchased by the consumer for consumption, in terms of whether the food is Vegetarian or Non-Vegetarian, for making an informed choice.

(c) The provisions of labelling of Non-Vegetarian food will come into force w.e.f. 4.10.2001. As regards labelling of Vegetarian food, the draft rules seeking to amend the PFA Rules 1955, were published in the Gazette of India on 16th May 2001, inviting comments from public. On the basis of comments received the draft final rules have been formulated and will be notified shortly.

Menace of Addiction to Prescription Drugs

2941. DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the menace of addiction to prescription drugs is on the increase in the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that prescription drug abuse is more in the case of sedatives and cough syrups among students; and